(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Upgradation of railway stations is a continuous process. Out of 258 railway stations situated in the State of Orissa, there are 40 upgraded stations.

(b) Minimum Essential Amenities as per norms have already been provided at all railway stations in the State of Orissa.

(c) Does not arise.

Meeting of Advisory Committees

266. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that General Railways Advisory Committees, Divisional Railway Advisory Committees and Railways Users Committees at railway station level are not meeting regularly; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) All efforts are made to hold the meetings of Divisional Railway Users' Consultative Committees (DRUCCs), Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Committees (ZRUCCs) and Station Consultative Committees (SCCs) as per schedule. Due to various reasons such as delay in receipt of nomination from various organizations, administrative constraints and exigencies, sometimes, meetings are not held as per schedule.

Network of touts in Railways

267. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even after computerisation there is a large network of touts operating in various major cities of the country;

(b) whether any such activities have come to the notice of her Ministry;

(c) what are the steps taken or are being taken to crack down on these touts;

(d) whether any arrest has been made in the last one year; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) During the course of internal checks, some cases have come to notice.

(c) Regular checks are conducted in and around the railway reservation offices to curb the activities of touts and other anti-social elements. Surveillance at reservation offices is also stepped up during peak rush periods. Touts so apprehended are taken up as per provisions of law. Travelling public is educated through various media to desist from procuring tickets from unauthorized people. A number of steps as introduction of new/special trains, augmentation of carrying capacity/extension of existing trains have also been undertaken to increase availability

of berths in trains; and provide reservation at the door step of the passengers by proliferation of e-ticketing facility.

(d) and (e) During the last year *i.e.* 2008-09 and during the current year 2009-10 (upto May, 09), 2521 and 298 touts were apprehended and prosecuted.

Stoppages of trains

268. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether mobs set ablaze bogies of two trains near Patna on 1st June, 2009 in protest against withdrawal of stoppage of several trains;

(b) if so, whether several express and superfast trains are making their stoppage at railway stations which have been found to be commercially unviable;

(c) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(d) whether Government proposes to review its decision to have halts at various stations and to ensure the safety of trains and passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Commercial viability is not the only factor for provision of stoppages. Sanction of stoppage also depends on other factors like availability of alternate services, geography of the area, operational requirements, significance of the place etc. Review of stoppages is an ongoing process and action as found feasible and justified is taken. As regard safety of trains and passengers, RPF staff are deployed to escort important mail/express/passenger trains and also deployed at important Railway stations in coordination with the Government Railway Police.

Licences for in-train catering

269. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the criteria for giving license for in-train catering and vending;

(b) whether the Railway Board or Zonal Railways or the IRCTC do the tendering;

(c) how is the area of operation for a licensee determined;

(d) the number of such licensee in-trains caterers;

(e) whether it is a fact that competition at the tendering stage creates monopoly in the service; and

(f) what steps have been taken to enhance competition in in-train catering and vending for the benefit of passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (f) Catering Policy of Indian Railways is under review.